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~~Case 49~~

Explication and Vindication

Of the first SECTION of the Short

OBSERVATIONS

ON THE FIRST

Principles and moving Powers

OF THE PRESENT

SYSTEM of PHILOSOPHY,

IN a LETTER to a LADY.

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!



L O N D O N:

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Application and Warrant

of the Court of Sessions at Glasgow

in the case of

James Watson

Respondent

vs

THE ROYAL BANK OF SCOTLAND

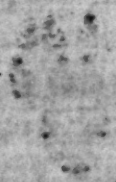


in the sum of

£1000

and interest

to be paid by



James Watson

James Watson

James Watson, Respondent, in the sum of £1000 and interest to be paid by James Watson

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Explication and Vindication

Of the first SECTION of the Short

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OF THE PRESENT

SYSTEM of PHILOSOPHY,

IN A LETTER to a LADY.

Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth!

MADAM,

I HAVE executed your Ladyship's commission, in every particular, according to the instructions your prudence and politeness pointed out to me. The author presents his respectful compliments to your Ladyship; he pays you the acknowledgements due to your good sense and impartiality, and expresses his grateful obligations to you for these favourable sentiments of him, which, he says, your candour and contempt of the lawless rage of tongues have dictated to you. It is

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with particular pleasure I transmit to you, Madam, a detail of the conversation I had with the author, which I persuade myself will give you the same satisfaction I received from him.

AFTER mutual compliments, and an explanation of the motives to my visit, I expressed my surprise at the clamour and reproach which that celebrated first section of his observations had occasioned, and wondered that so base a misrepresentation of his meaning should gain any credit among people of understanding. Neither it does, he replied, but the odious imputation has been hatched and hastily circulated by designing persons, who hoped that the calumny, like most other common reports, would be readily swallowed and propagated by thousands, who would never give themselves the trouble of enquiring into either the truth or probability of the matter. With the same view it was at the same time artfully surmised, that the author had rendered the clergy his enemies, to his hurt in his business. I am little afraid, said he, of hurting myself by the freedom of my sentiments upon any subject, while both my public and private character are otherwise irreproachable: But I believe the insinuation is very grossly injurious to, and unworthy of that body of men. I have no general acquaintance among them, but I think myself obliged to judge of others by such of them as I am known to, and therefore I must treat it as a very unjust imputation.

tion upon both their integrity and understandings.

Is it possible, I said, that the authors of the report can be so ignorant as to have mistaken your meaning in that section? I cannot think it answered he. I don't believe any person suspects me of Atheism, tho' some may have a suspicion of my entertaining sentiments equally derogatory to any philosophical plans and manufacturings of religion. No person can mistake what I have said in the last paragraph of my observations on the motions of the secondary planets, which is as followeth. — " Upon the whole, I conclude, There are only two powers within the compass of human conception, which can be considered sufficient to produce and maintain these lofty and intricate revolutions performed by the heavenly bodies. These are, either the direct and immediate efficacy of an omnipotent thinking agent, who can vary and bend the motions of all the orbs uninterruptedly according to his will, and with infinitely more ease than a man can move his hand, and whatever he holds in it, in any direction he pleases: Or, an inconceivably subtle and profound combination of mechanical powers, executed by that same Artist who gives being and structure unerringly to every thing after its kind." — I have in other parts of my observations more than once intimated my suspicion, that these powers of motion in nature, which have been generally

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considered as laws, were only the effects of refined mechanism. Now whether the suspicion is just or not, or whatever is the evidence I may have to propose in support of it, yet no person can be of that opinion, without supposing an artist and author of infinite capacity; whereas they who suppose any power constantly employed in nature, which for ought they know may be spiritual, can arrive at no rational evidence which can lead them to discover that such a power is only a subordinate one.

I SHALL shew you also, continued he, with what justice I am reproached with denying distributive justice in God. It is for no other reason, but because I infer from that intertexture of good and evil, &c. here, unexplicable by human capacities, the necessity of a *revelation*, in order to vindicate and explain the course of providence in this world. Let me read to you the very concluding paragraph of that infamous section upon philosophical Theology, — “ In a world of uncertainty, where good and evil, virtue and vice, harmony and confusion, happiness and misery, life and death, and all other contradictions, are undeniably blended together in an unconceivable perplexity; what can such grovelling, bewildered capacities as ours infer? The most *natural* and *just* reflection that can occur to such creatures, even after we are informed that these things are the result of Infinite goodness and wisdom, is, that they must be in-

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“ intentionally wrapt up in darkness, in order
 “ to confound all our impotent pretensions
 “ to penetration; and to reduce us to the
 “ mortifying necessity of confessing, That
 “ the author himself must give a key to his
 “ works, before we can conceive any mean-
 “ ing either in their structure or ends.”—

Now Sir, said he, is it ignorance do you think, that has prompted the authors of such accusations. Why truly, replied I, if it is ignorance, it is very gross ignorance; and I cannot help thinking you are fully supported in what you say: There can be no impiety in asserting that the dictates of reason are very unequal for resolving such a subject, when we see that the daily oppression and miseries of innocence, and the no less frequent prosperity of oppressors, and authors of all other violence and wickedness in their hardened courses, with thousands of such unfathomable distributions, were enough to shake the firmness, not only of persons who enjoyed the benefit of revelation, but of such as were inspired themselves; as will appear to any person who consults the scriptures in general, and in particular the lxxiii. Psalm.

I could not help smiling, Madam, when he said, now Sir, I dare say that, notwithstanding all this clamour of atheism, and a design to subvert all the principles of religion raised against me, you and every person of understanding must perceive, that the substance and sum of all that I have wrote in that unfortunate section, is no more than
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this:—If all the philosophers, and all the divines who have treated Theology philosophically, that ever have been, are, or shall be, had been assembled in one general council, they could not have dictated that plain and simple-like sentence.—*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*—

IT is plain, added he, that the observations are abstracted disquisitions, calculated merely for the entertainment and examination of philosophers, if they pleased; and if they had pleased, the subjects might have been canvassed among such, if not to the determination of the points, yet at least without any cause of umbrage among them, until the return of the comet 1680. But seeing some are disposed to reduce that same first section to a religious controversy, I have no objection, let them try it as such.

THERE is nothing to prevent the prize, which has been long disputed between the atheists and deists, from being decided in favour of the former, but this one obstacle; If atheism is the truth, there ought never to have been such a thought in the mind of man as the supposition of *a creator*. For if the atheist proves, as I believe he may, that nature cannot demonstrate its own creation, or contains in itself no evidence or intimation that it was once *nothing*; then we must certainly conclude, that what the creation cannot intimate or suggest to the mind of man, could never enter it. How could such

a supposition take its rise among mankind then? Every piece of knowledge among men, must take its rise either from reasoning upon what is suggested to the mind by nature, or from *information*: There is not a third channel for conveying instruction into the soul. What cannot be suggested to the mind by means of the senses, can never come within the reach of reason either to confirm it or to improve upon it: What is hid to all men's understandings, one man cannot inform another of; therefore if men have universally a supposition among them, which nature could not excite in their breasts, it is an infallible proof that they must originally have derived it by information from God, which is *revelation*. Upon this I make the following observation; it is very possible that an atheist may become a christian; but if he reasons strictly, there is no chance of his ever becoming a deist or professor of natural religion: because revelation gives him the self-evidence of its own certainty, merely by discovering to the mind what nothing in the whole compass of the universe could suggest to it. *A truth known which cannot be discovered, proves itself to be revelation.* This not only fixes the certainty of a revelation among men, but it becomes the criterion, and test of which is *the revelation* we of all others must acknowledge as the information of God. While the general acknowledgment of a God stands as an immoveable proof, that there must have been a discovery made by him of himself to men, no man can be

be at a loss to find out which is the revelation that makes that discovery, with many others which it could never have entered into the heart of man to conceive.

HERE I interrupted the author, by asking him, How the professed atheists, if there were any such, could resist the force of his argument against them? He said, he believed they were pretty much at a loss upon that subject; he knew little of their writings, but if, for confirmation of what he said, any persons had a mind to consult their writings, he believed they would find, that while the atheists made pretty easy work of overturning the deists and their arguments; after they had done so, they found themselves strangely embarrassed in accounting for the rise of the acknowledgement and worship of a creator. To this day they cannot arrive at a more plausible conjecture to solve that Gordian knot, than that old trite Latin sentence, which in English is, *Fear first suggested the being of Gods to mankind.* But such an answer is rather a putting off the difficulty, than the result of a candid examination of the question. There is a certain point, beyond which every set of men who follow a system will not argue; there they fix: if you offer to discompose them further, they will laugh at you; and if they find that will not do, you put them into a rage. Every person must see that the above solution is a mere evasion. For tho' people may freight themselves with creatures of their own imagination, and such imper-

Imperceptible powers as they know by their effects do exist, they cannot terrify themselves with the existence of a power which neither their reason nor their imagination can suggest to them.

INDEED it must be owned there was a good deal of justice in that saying, as it was first applied, for in these days all the imperceptible powers in nature, such as the motions of the celestial bodies, the influences of the sun and air, earthquakes, thunder, all other meteors, and a thousand other accidents and things in nature, which were known to be either beneficial or hurtful to men, were ascribed to the influence of some one intelligent power or another: These were all respected as deities: So brightly did the lights of philosophy shine in the world in general for several thousand years! So with justice might the poet (whose philosophy taught him that these were necessary agents, whatever the nature of their power was) say at that time, that fear created these powers into respectable Deities. But tho' fear might prompt men to reverence every power they were afraid of, fear could never prompt men to a presumption of the world's being once *nothing*, and consequently to the supposition of a creator. In justice also to the fair and plain reasoning of the heathens, it ought to be observed, that they always fixed upon an intelligent agent, whenever they could not discern mechanism, or pursue the connexion of cause and effect any further. If our modern philosophers, when
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they have traced nature into powers which they don't pretend to explain, nor to determine whether they are spiritual or not; if they still won't acknowledge these as intellectual powers, but profess to believe a Creator superiour to them; I find no fault with them: I am persuaded of the same myself, not by philosophy, but upon the evidence of my own utter incapacity for having ever so much as dreamed of such a thing, unless I had been told it; and consequently upon the conviction, that such information must have been originally communicated by ONE who well knew, what it was not in the power of any of mankind to know, unless he had told them.

I COULD not help agreeing, Madam, with the author's reasoning and observations; for certainly what is undiscoverable by us, and yet acknowledged amongst us, is its own voucher, that it is a revelation. So that if the deists cannot prove a Creator, and if the atheists cannot account for the origin of a supposition acknowledged and received by us, which can neither be suggested to our perceptions nor deduced by our understandings; then certainly there can be only one other source from whence the knowledge of such a truth can be derived. He answered, that the truth of that conclusion was confirmed by matter of fact, and the justest observations; several of which he mentioned to me. Such as, It is evident that the acknowledgement of God, the author of all things, was never intended

to be either acquired or propagated among mankind by philosophy, or abstracted reasonings and scrutinies. It is a truth the acknowledgement of which was intended to be *universal*; whereas we are too certain that either just or abstracted reasoning can scarcely be imputed to a great many of the few among mankind, who aim at the reputation of philosophers: Hence we must infer, that the evidence of any truth which was communicated for the general information of our species, could never be intended to depend upon arguments which few minds are able to form; nay, which when stated to them, few can comprehend. To take an example; says he, from the presumed end of this world, instead of its beginning: Suppose a mathematician should assure a thousand common people, who already make no doubt of the matter, upon the credit of testimony, that the world must necessarily have an end, which could be proved by the exact observation of astronomers, who had found that the earth approached some seconds nearer the sun at the end of a thousand years, than it was at the beginning of that time. I apprehend it would require some calculation to ascertain in what proportion the testimony of the mathematician would corroborate the testimony of God, which that thousand people were previously crediting. For while they were incapable of following out his demonstration, they could never comprehend his evidence, and so must rest on his testimony of the certainty and conclusiveness of the observation.

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Hence I must conclude, that as few men can prosecute such evidence upon any point, for the knowledge of these truths, which were intended to be universal, must rest upon some more simple evidence : And as there are some truths which God must have intended that simple plain men should be as sure of as the learned and the wise ; I must beg the wise men's pardon for being of opinion, that the evidence which must justify the body of mankind in any important acknowledgement, must be evidence sufficient for the philosophers also, and can draw little additional credit from the acuteness of either their reasonings or observations.

AGAIN, The objects of faith carry all that evidence and certainty in themselves, merely by their being known, which either reasoning or demonstration can give in matters to which these are applicable. The knowledge of a truth, or of a system of truths, unattainable by the natural powers of thought, is a miracle of a superiour nature to any sensible one : *It is a standing miracle in the intellectual world* : It is as much a miracle as a sixth sense impressed upon our natures would be, and its certainty is wholly of that kind which would be conveyed by the objects of that sense crowding into our minds. Hence we must conclude, that the Creator has made *faith*, and *the evidence contained in what he testifies*, essential to the constitution of man. He has given us a conviction of it in the affairs of this life, by contriving it so, that,

that, in spite of all the sceptical sophistry we can use to deceive ourselves, the cardinal hinges of society and knowledge, with almost all the general actions or business of life, are moved by *testimony* and *faith*. Finite creatures cannot be omnipresent to satisfy their senses, and they want omniscience to acquaint them with what they must know: Their existence is only in the present time, and they must rely upon testimony for the knowledge of past and future; and besides, we are all by an indispensable necessity nursed up from a state of infancy and childhood, when implicit credit is the only rational function we can exercise. Can documents be more strongly laid for the necessity and suitableness of our depending on the testimony of an omniscient infallible Creator? By these considerations it would seem our maker was aware of our not acquiescing in that kind of evidence which he gives by *testimony*, that he laid the facts from which such a conclusion necessarily arises so obvious and strong in our constitutions; in order, sometime or other, to strike us with unanswerable conviction, and leave us without apology.

AGAIN, I must observe, continued the author, whatever knowledge is the effect of man's own reason, reflection or observation, can never be lost nor corrupted by these men afterwards: But these truths which we derive only from *testimony*, and the acknowledgement of which depend upon it entirely, may be both corrupted and lost in a great mea-

measure. It is adhering to the means which convey to us our information, and these only, that can preserve our knowledge of any thing. What we discover or acquire by *reason*, we can never either lose or corrupt by *reasoning*. But on the other hand, I am afraid, whatever is discovered to us by *testimony*, and what we have no other means of knowing, can never be improved by reasoning and philosophical penetration. Nay, I express it too modestly; it must be corrupted by it. Is not this truth confirmed by the fatal experience of all mankind? It is self-evident, I think, that the knowledge of God was conveyed to man originally by *revelation*: At the same time the scripture expressly declares that it was by wisdom that the world lost the knowledge of God; which if it has any meaning, must be understood, That the world by attempting to cultivate *divine information* by their own reasoning, lost the knowledge of God; that is to say, of who was God.

THE scripture still explains the thing further; because God for the wisest purposes and ends, thought proper to connect with the original discovery of himself to men, a system of natural or material figures and shadows, of what in due time he was to fulfil and explain to them more explicitly afterwards; therefore the wisdom of man (which in these days made no exception to that mode of instruction, however silly it may appear to our philosophical understandings now) judged it mighty convenient, as they
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saw there were numberless other very proper symbolical figures of the divine attributes and future designs to be found; they, I say, therefore judged it vastly proper to multiply and encrease the figurative system of knowledge; and so they proceeded in their wisdom, till they knew not how to distinguish God from the figures they had wisely invented. Thus in process of time they changed the glory of the incorruptible God, into an image made like unto corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things: In short, professing to be wise, they became fools. That this was the state of mankind, from which all the philosophy in the world could never recover them, till a further testimony from God gradually opened their eyes, at least in some measure, is beyond the denial of the wildest sceptic. From whence every rational man must infer, *that what knowledge we derive from testimony, cannot be improved by reasoning.*

LET us see again, what improvement the wisdom of philosophy and abstracted reasoning has made in our own days, of the information God has given us of himself? What improvement has been made on the Divine testimony by the ablest demonstrator of a *philosophical* God. God has declared himself in three relations: In each of which (tho' as clearly distinguished to us in the discovery, as personality is among men) he testifies there is an equality of perfections and powers united in one common understanding and will,

co-operating relatively in all things. These relations are discovered to be perfectly adapted to our circumstances, and equally engaged in the execution of an infinite plan upon which our eternal security and happiness depends. Says philosophy, these things cannot be: It is contrary to mathematical demonstration: It is a contradiction in arithmetic, which is the same thing. Sound reason teaches us, that God exists in perfect unity; infinite space is his sensorium receptacle, the organ or residence of his being and perfections, or I don't know what to call it; by which means, he who says he filleth all things, is likewise made to fill *nothing*: And as that space is infinite, indivisible simple unity, so must he be. The following fable however, gives a tolerably clear view of the justice of the application of what is called strict philosophical reasoning, to matters beyond the reach of our conceptions.

IN the days of fables, there was a nation of philosophers, who were excluded from all communication with men of an ordinary make. Their form was in this particular extraordinary: They were endowed with only one organ for each sense. They had only one eye, one ear, and one nostril, but each so vigorous, that they found no possible defect in their own frame. The sovereign of that people had never been seen by them; for he resided in an inaccessible palace, which, at the same time, was so advantageously situated, that from thence he superintended all their district.

district. The philosophers were very desirous of procuring, by some effort of their own, a view of the prince's person : However, he who was acquainted with their curiosity and temper, judged it more proper to send them a description of it ; and among other things informed them that he had *two eyes*, &c. This account threw the whole nation into a flame of controversy among themselves. Some were for believing the account brought to them, because they could find no exception to the credentials of the messengers who carried them the information ; and they could see no interest the prince had to serve by imposing upon them. Others, who could not form any just idea of such an unaccountable phenomenon, were for considering one of the eyes, as something like a spying-glass to the other. But the most philosophical disputants amongst them, reasoned thus : They said it was as impossible that one *sense* could have *two organs*, as it was that two or three could in any respect be *one*. Is not each sense one and indivisible ? How is it possible then, that one sense can exist in different organs, and yet be indivisible ? If we had two eyes, we must also have two senses of seeing : It is impossible that each eye could see the same object, without seeing it double. If we had two eyes we would have two senses, and if we had two senses, it would make each of us two individuals. Two organs of sense must make two impressions ; two impressions must make two senses ; and two senses of the same undistinguishable kind, can only exist in two

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different beings. Away with such nonsense! —This was sound reasoning and gained many orators to enforce the decisiveness of it.

THE reasoning is very clear, I replied to the author, and I much question if two eyed people can detect any fallacy in it; tho' they know the contrary, and are experimentally confirmed in it by sensible evidence.—But to drop the fable, one would think such reasoners would support their divinity much better, if they would throw aside the scriptures entirely; for if these declare any one truth with precision, it is, That JESUS CHRIST created the world and all things visible and invisible, and upholds them (which is nothing different from a continued exertion of creative power) by the word of his power. It is very true, replied the author; but you are not to consider philosophical Theology as always employed in discovering evidence: It has a great deal of work cut out for it, and more than it will soon put thro' its hands, in destroying the evidence that may appear for these things philosophy cannot admit of. I don't understand these things, said I; but I have no idea of either the wisdom or piety of that philosophy, that teaches, in effect, that the Creator was made himself: That the Creator ought not to be worshipped. How can men plead for the evidence of nature to prove there is a God; if creating does not characterise One God, and constitute him the object of worship?

I DON'T know well what they say, answered the author, if they do not make some distinction between creating, and being the instrument of creation. It is the only subterfuge, tho' an affront to common sense, they can have recourse to; for if they do fly to it, in the first place, it is false; for the scriptures make no such distinction. The scriptures have no where more expressly said, that God created the world, than they have said that JESUS CHRIST created the world. Ask a deist, By whom was the world created? He must answer, By God: In the next place, it is abominably bad philosophy; for creation can admit of no instrumentality. The only definition that can be given of creation is, that it is *working without either instruments, or materials for instruments to work upon*. Therefore to teach that God created the worlds by an instrument who is not God, is not only contemptible nonsense, but gross atheism under the mask of christianity.*

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* Since I wrote this, a small tract was put into my hand, called, *An Appeal to the common Sense of all Christian People, &c.* It is the excursion of one of the philosophical divines, upon an evidence-destroying expedition. The author, I see, does not dispute but that the divine attributes, such as, eternity, omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence, &c. are found applied in scripture to *Jesus Christ*; but I suppose he endeavours to prove, that these terms mean one thing when applied to *him*, and another when applied to God. This will be overturning evidence indeed! I have only consulted him upon the work of creation's being attributed to that *person*; and as the fact will not deny, I find he is obliged to consider *him* as an *inferior instrument* of creation. Surely, an *inferior instrument* to work upon *nothing*, is an idea peculiar to philosophical divinity. I don't believe the common sense of christian people can attain any such conception. It is easy enough to conceive, where there are equals in capacity, how one may perform by agreement or office, what may be ascribed to another also: But an *inferior instrument* of creation, is a definition of an idea not yet disclosed to the human mind. If *Cesar* had been king of *Macedonia*, and *Alexander*, by office, his Captain General,

FOR my own part, I have no manner of conception of such working, after I am informed of the fact: therefore I never could have supposed it without information. Neither can I comprehend the revealed nature of God: How can I? When I do not understand, more than the smallest insect, how matter and spirit are made one in my own person; or how eye and eye are united in one perception, and yet each conveys the whole

General, it is obvious to common sense, with what propriety it might have been said, that *Cæsar* conquered the world by *Alexander*; without derogating from the ability of *Alexander*, to conquer the world for himself, and by himself: Or, if a man were about to make an astronomical observation, he might apply what eye he chused to the telescope; because they were both equally qualified for the impression, and equally connected with his perception. The author lays some unexplained stress upon its being always said, the world was created by *Jesus Christ*; and is pleased to compare it with its being said, God led the *Israelites* by the hand of *Moses*. I see no impropriety in the comparison, but that it does not answer his purpose. If God led that people by *Moses*; certainly *Moses* was either naturally capable of leading them according to God's mind, or God miraculously endowed him with capacity for doing it. And by the same rule, if God created the world by *Jesus Christ*, he was either naturally sufficient for executing that work according to God's mind, or God endowed him with capacity sufficient for the work. But, unless *Jesus Christ* is God, whichever way that author or his partisans chuse to explain it, it must follow, that creating is no characteristic and incommunicable attribute of God. But if he by whom creatures were created is not entitled to their homage and worship as God; I know not by what characters such philosophers will make known to the common sense of christians that God whom they ought to worship.

THAT curious need only further consult the last paragraph of this remarkable performance, in order to gain a just idea of its distinguished merit and address in criticism. In order to set aside the difficulty he finds in God's saying, *Let us make man*, he tells his christian readers, the stress of the difficulty lies in these two words—*let us*—and removes it by telling them, God says to the *Israelites*, *let us reason together*, which does not imply their equality to him. To be sure it does not; but it implies their capacity for reasoning, or being convinced by reasoning: And if he had said to them, *let us make*, it would have implied their capacity for creating; or else that they were his assistants, apprentices or scholars he was calling to work with him.—But it would be unbecoming the reverence due to holy things, to indulge, upon such a subject, the loose reflections which such corrupt reasoning upon the most sacred truths, expressed in the plainest terms, exposes this author unto. One would hope such a work will prove a snare but to few.

whole idea to my perception. All comparisons to illustrate the testimony God has given of Himself must be imperfect, and are perhaps impertinent; but this they most certainly shew, that many of the secrets of nature, tho' certain facts, are as puzzling to our boasted reason, as any thing God has revealed: And I know no good reason the philosophers have yet assigned, why God may not mortify their understandings with matters of faith, as well as with objects of sense. This I know, *That God stretched forth the heavens alone, and spread abroad the earth by himself*; therefore JESUS CHRIST is one with the Creator, otherwise the scriptures are false.

BUT the observation we are upon is sufficiently illustrated. It is also confirmed most fatally by the universal consent of history, from which it appears, that all mankind, tho' they acknowledged that sublime truth, the being of a God, were nevertheless unvariably disposed to sink and degenerate from the purity of it, into the most gross and scandalous abominations and brutish ignorance; such, as was a reproach to human nature, in the application of it; and this always in the very same proportion, that the revealed accounts of God were neglected, corrupted, or lost among men. From whence I infer, that if human penetration had had any share in the discovery, these means must have preserved it in purity: Which never was the case among any nation upon the face of the earth. I will not mortify the patrons of the religion of nature any fur-

further upon this article, but leave them to glean what other inferences may be deduced from this incontestible fact, in favour of their dignity of human nature. At the same time I recommend to them the discussion of this question, Whether is he who worshippeth the work of his own head less an idolater, than he who worshippeth the work of his own hands?

I COULD not refuse adding, in assent to what the author had said, that it was indeed very strange, that men should so tenaciously persist in pretending to maintain as a fact, what the human race could never furnish out an example of; namely, a man who without the help of information had discovered the being of a Creator; or even, the being of an invisible object of worship and adoration: Whereas there have been millions of millions who have degraded their rational powers so far as to maintain the most brutal ideas of a Deity, and to do homage to him by the most beastly and inhuman actions. It is very true, he replied, and for this very reason I would advise all mankind so far as I had access, to beware of giving ear to philosophical declaimers upon that great truth, and what relates to it: For, if we derive the acknowledgement of it originally from revelation, nothing but revelation can preserve it pure, and enforce that influence it ought to have upon our minds; and in the same degree we are drawn from revelation, to trust to reason and philosophy in the cultivation of it, and the duties

duties and obligations therewith connected, in the same degree will we make shipwreck of that knowledge, if the fatal experience of all ages carries any evidence in it.

I CANNOT therefore understand how any man apologises to himself, for a scandalous and most criminal abuse of his rational faculties, who has not studied and examined the scriptures with more close attention, than ever any mathematician or financier did the most intricate proposition or calculation: Every man knows that his duration in this world is assuredly as perishable and uncertain as that of any tulip in a garden. He hears of a book which discovers and proposes to him an eternal existence, in a world whose excellency and beauty excels this incomparably more, than the light of the sun surpasses the shadows which fall where it is obstructed: A *world* where the *Creator* constitutes himself the original and substance of every shadowy created perfection and excellency, which he allows us a transient glance and enjoyment of here. He hears of these things, and yet he either affronts the discovery with his contempt and neglect; or being importuned by more necessary concerns, he cannot find leisure to examine it, and contents himself with taking occasionally other people's report of the matter, whose credit and judgment he would not prefer to his own in the most trifling affair of life: Notwithstanding he is assured in the discovery, that every person's individual security for inheriting a share in
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that world, is indispensibly connected with his own receiving the testimony, and perceiving the evidence for it, which the discoverer gives in his testimony; and which no testimony on earth can supersede, render unnecessary, or supply the place of in the mind.

BUT, setting aside the whole importance of the matter; is it possible that any man of sense can treat the presumption of a revelation with indifference, and not prefer the arriving at a point of certainty upon the subject, to all other engagements? Is it an affront to any man's understanding supinely to acquiesce in God's being the author of the scriptures, and not be enflamed with as much ardour, as to suppose, that if it is so, then certainly God must shine in his writings as an *author*, as much as he does in his works as a *creator*. If his word, if the breath of his mouth, brought forth into being this vast and incomprehensible world, nature with all its powers; so consummate and unsearchable, that all nations, when left to themselves, have acknowledged it, as God; what must a volume of words spoken by him who is omnipotent in power, infallible in truth, and infinite in knowledge, be? Each sentence of which, if applied to that purpose, must have been sufficient to pronounce such another universe as this into existence. Shall reptiles like we, after our toilsome labour of poring, correcting, blotting out, and interlining, revolve with enraptured complacency
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and admiration our own pitiful compositions, and at the same time treat with consummate neglect, the writings of Him, who upholds and cherishes all nature by *the word of his power*? Who can make his doctrine descend as the rain upon the earth, and his speech distil as the dew and as showers upon the grass.

When we weigh the writings of the most high God in this their genuine light, what idea can any person have of the impudent impertinence of such philosophical Theologists, as would make us believe they credit the scriptures, while they take upon them to correct its style as not philosophically just. No wonder, then, the sceptics and deists triumph over such abject and wretched apologists for revelation, as would have them to believe, that He who holds all nature in his hand, does not know how to accommodate his doctrine to the capacities of the vulgar, without speaking with philosophical impropriety of his own works. Will they, indeed, teach Him to speak, who gave a mouth to man?

It is the misfortune, I said to the author, of these incorrigible bigots to natural religion, that tho' they incline to preserve the formality of a civil respect to revelation; yet it is not without some grudge that they hear any warm encomiums upon that perfection and inexpressible excellency which must be contained in every sentence of it, if it is the word of God. They cannot help entertain-

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ing it as implying some tacit detracting from these natural studies, which they think shew off their own capacities to the greatest advantage. It is not because nature illustrates the divine character most eminently, but because our shallow, little knowledge, and discoveries in it, flatter our own penetration and understandings, that revelation is admitted only as a small supplement to it, intended principally for the assistance of such as want time or capacity to elevate their minds to philosophical researches.

I AM far from thinking, said the author, that revelation supercedes any use for the creation, in displaying the boundless wisdom and perfections of the Creator: No man who is persuaded of the being of a Creator, can escape being struck with the glory and magnificence of the divine perfections unfolded in his works; nor do I think any knowledge we can attain therein, has the least tendency to weaken these illustrious impressions of creative power and preservation, which nature enforces: Only I say, the frame of nature is so stupenduously high and inconceivable, that we could never have penetrated beyond it, without a positive testimony from the Creator, darting that beam of spiritual knowledge into the world; in order to enlarge the limits of our capacity, and direct our minds in the application of that unsearchable wisdom and power, which is in exercise every where thro' the whole extent of nature.

At the same time, I am positive, that such is the nature of that display, that the most profound philosopher derives no advantage above the shepherd or the clown, by his superlative knowledge of nature. Tho' knowledge ought not to weaken it, yet the grandeur of the scene, when considered as the workmanship of the Most High, is as obvious and striking to the shepherd, as to the most accurate philosopher. In the same manner as a rich embroidery is as beautiful to the eye of a rustic, as it is to the artist who conceives the execution of the work. Does the skillful anatomist or physiologist's meal nourish him more, than the husbandman's does him; because the former has studied and can explain the whole process of digestion, and the qualities of digestible food? Say but, that there is a Creator, and the heavens declare his glory, and the sky teaches his power as irresistibly to the illiterate peasant, as to the profound researcher into nature. But still I maintain, that it is only testimony that can discover an author of nature, superior to that unsearchable system which must appear infinite beyond the conception of creatures; and that discovery stands irrefragably its own voucher, *that it is a revelation.* One further observation in confirmation of this I shall mention.

In the whole scripture there is not one argument or miracle adduced in support of this discovery. *The evidence for it and the discovery itself are the same:* But numberless

are the arguments, miracles, remonstrances and appeals, to teach and determine men, whom to acknowledge as God: Whereas, if men had been themselves the discoverers of the *first truth*, they could never have been mistaken in the *second*. And so I think we may dismiss this topic, and consign it to the further scrutiny of the philosophers.

THE light of nature, I then said to the author, has been long maintained by many who were sincerely friends to revelation: But I am persuaded neither they, nor the people who are its professed devotees, have ever considered what it means. I wish, however, that subject were clearly explained, for the benefit of such people as may labour under involuntary mistakes about it. I little thought, replied the author, I should have any concern with that subject upon this occasion, further than as it was treated in an abstracted philosophical manner in the observations. But as I see that my zealous antagonists judge it more prudent, to trust to the influence of what prejudice and zeal they can foment against the author, than to attack the argument openly; I think I shall be able, in few words, to set the meaning of that term, *the light of nature*, in so intelligible a view, that every reader shall be at no loss which sense of the term to approve and embrace.

THERE are only two senses in which *the light of nature* can be understood by those who depend upon the sufficiency of their own

unassisted capacities, for attaining the knowledge of God, of their connections with him, and their obligations to him; and one or other of these they must mean; the unfortunately the human race has never yet, at least, furnished one example in confirmation of either sense. They must either mean, *first*, That, without the assistance of education, without any cultivation of his mind, or any of these advantages which he derives from society as he grows up to maturity, man would notwithstanding become a rational, reflecting creature, acquire the knowledge of a Creator, of himself, and all other visible things, and of the obligations and homage which as a man he owes to his Maker. If this be their meaning by *the light of nature*, I don't believe one word of it; neither, I dare say, does any man of common sense: For of all the wild men ever we heard of, from the beginning of the world down to *Peter*, (I think they called him) who was caught in the woods of *Germany* and brought over to *England* in *King George* the first's time, there was never one of them that shewed greater signs of being rational than a horse or a bear. If my antagonists will pronounce me an infidel on this account, I cannot help it; but I must honestly declare, that let me do what I will, I cannot bring myself to believe one sentence of the history of *Valentine* and *Orfan*, or of any of those wild men who became great philosophers.

THEY betray very shallow understandings, and

and great ignorance of their own constitution; who imagine that any man, without the culture of society, will grow rational of his own accord. Observation must convince every one who reflects, of the importance and necessary subserviency of education and society, to the formation and improvement of the understanding. The state of savages testifies to us, that in proportion as society is imperfect, there is a parallel depression and load upon the exercise of the understanding, in so much, that where the rudiments of society are scarcely known, the vestiges of reason in individuals appear almost totally untraceable. They are much mistaken who imagine man is born a rational creature; he is born only *capable of becoming rational*.*

W E L L, but it will perhaps be now alleged, this is not what the philosophers mean. They must then mean, *secondly*, That if man were perfectly educated, and rendered completely rational, with exquisitely fine talents, but kept all the while totally uninformed of any spiritual Being or Creator, he would by the strength of his own mind discover that all things were once *nothing*, and that an infinitely powerful Being produced out of nothing the person himself, and all the vast compass and variety of beings which he surveys in heaven and upon the earth. This is boldly and roundly asserted to be sure; but I am afraid with as little foundation or evidence as the former hypothesis. We have hitherto

* See *Lects on Human Understanding*.

been furnished with no example of the fact, and therefore it must be referred to future experiment and observation, if any person shall be found foolish enough, and curious enough to put it to the trial, in the education of a child for that purpose. But this presumption discovers little more knowledge or discerning about the human constitution, than the former: Our naturalists seem never to have adverted, that it is impossible to rear a man by education to the full use of his rational faculties, without implanting in him the *principles of knowledge*, before he arrives at the capacity of examining them: So that nothing can be more contrary to the nature of man, than their *light of nature*, in whatever light we survey it.

BUT perhaps the philosophers may have recourse to a third meaning for *the light of nature*, and define it an ability to prove by rational arguments, what we have been before taught to acknowledge. Thus like the treacherous and ungrateful favourites of a prince, they turn the arms and power with which he has entrusted them against himself; and magnanimously undertake to supersede the necessity of revelation, by assuming its *first principles*. But still this unlucky question recoils upon them: What sort of knowledge is this, and whence came it, which every man can prove, and no man has discovered?

BUT to be plain, that galling first section of the observations is wrote on purpose, to search

search into the bottom of our pretended ability, to prove by fair argument, what we cannot discover : And I own, I despair of seeing it refuted soon, by any other means than these already tried. Every man who acknowledges that great truth, the being of a Creator of heaven and earth, and all things therein, will find numberless evidences of the divine glory, to elevate his views of that important truth which *he believes*, but none to supersede his faith, and set his acknowledgement upon the footing and evidence of either *mathematical or philosophical demonstration*.

THIS therefore I will venture to risk as a maxim, *That to undertake to prove by reason, what we cannot discover by the same means, is the high road to scepticism.* The acknowledgement of a God is a safe and sure first principle and guide, in all our researches after wisdom and inquiries into nature; but they who are so unhappy as to lay aside that compass, and, instead of using it, go, without it, a voyage into incomprehensible nature, in search of a God, may, when it is too late, find themselves launched into an ocean, where they shall never have the consolation of discovering a shore any more. A very wise man once said, *that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*, and we cannot fear God before we know him; therefore I cannot entertain any very respectable opinion of that wisdom which has for its object, the discovery of a God; because it ends where it ought to begin.

SIR, said I to the author, you have rejected *the light of nature*, and I must acknowledge have overturned it; with me at least, in so many senses, that I begin to be anxious to hear in what sense you maintain it. You will permit me to observe to you, he answered, in order to your understanding me distinctly, wherein the essential difference lies between us and other creatures. We have senses and passions in common with brutes; to guide these, they have unerring instinct, in distinction from us, and we are ennobled with reason in distinction from them. I noticed a little above, that in order to constitute reason, it was necessary man should be educated, taught by precept and example, and have the principles of knowledge implanted in his mind, before he arrive at either capacity or attention to examine them. Without these the mind of man would be in a worse state than that of the brute creation.

THIS then is plainly and evidently the nature of man; and it is a certain fact, known to all men, which philosophy cannot overturn. Whatever knowledge therefore is implanted in man by the above means, is natural knowledge; it is *the light of nature*: Not because we all can either discover it or demonstrate it by evidence deduced from nature; but, because all men acquire it in a *natural* way, tho' none could have discovered it. Every thing therefore which can be considered as universal among mankind, is *natural*: But then, many of these pieces of uni-
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versal knowledge, discover and prove themselves not to be the result of reasoning, by the variations they undergo, in different parts and ages of the world; whereas, there is a stated uniformity and agreement in these pieces of knowledge, which are the result of observation, or clear and rational evidence.

T H E R E cannot be a more plain and convincing example given of this, than the use of language. It is universal, and natural to men: Yet it is not the product of reason; but on the contrary, the knowledge of it is fundamentally necessary to forming us rational creatures; for it is by means of it, we acquire a rational use of our ideas. Tho' it is *universal* and *natural*, no human creature would speak unless taught: And tho' language is universal, yet there is nothing more diversified among men. In all these things, the acknowledgement of a God and the state of language in the world are parallel.

I C A N N O T take upon me to enumerate all the branches of *the light of nature* considered in this view; but the most general and important of them are: The use of language; the acknowledgement of a God the object of worship; the knowledge of our relations, and of our natural and civil connections, with the obligations that arise therefrom, which yet no man would have discovered if he had been reared in the ignorance of them; the distinction between right and wrong, which, tho' in some things is agreed on among men, yet is, and
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has been very variable, in many important cases, in different ages and nations; the consciousness of guilt, which is regulated by the former; the belief of a future state; the fear of punishment, and a system of worship which acknowledges demerit and deprecates punishment, &c. We may add to these, national, characteristic habits and customs, and turns of thinking. But it is worthy of the observation of all the philosophical Theologists, that there is not to be traced in any system of symbolical worship among either *Jews* or *Pagans*, the least vestige of any religious rite, action or ceremony, which so much as implied personal merit or title to happiness. That was hatched among the philosophers and good-men makers, and confined to their ethics. I don't mean that the necessity of fitness for unmerited happiness was not inculcated. But to conclude, the knowledge of a God is the first principle of all knowledge; and they who attempt to discover and search him out by knowledge, or rather what they call so, invert the divine design of both revelation and nature. They are like men who, not satisfied with seeing the sun in their own hemisphere, undertake to dig thro' to the antipodes in order to discover him: They are like men who should wisely engage in framing a new language, out of the loose letters of the alphabet, in order to demonstrate they can speak their mother-tongue.

O U R philosophers talk, and have talked a great deal to very bad purpose, I am afraid,
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about the dignity of human nature ; but philosophy will never discover to them its true grandeur, the perfection of its destination, and that elevated dignity which He, who breathed into man his soul, and must best know its powers and capacity, has laid out for it. I am afraid, said I, that the philosophers have confounded the *capacity* and the *dignity* of human nature together, or rather given us the one for the other ; whereas the greater our capacity is, the greater is our infamy and the baseness of our nature, if that capacity is prostituted and misapplied. But tho' we were all angels, what are our excellency and endowments to him who formed them ? Must we plead the gifts which His own fullness of goodness has shed down upon us, as the price of his future favours and kindness to us ; and enhance our own importance and value with him, by spreading forth and strutting in our own imaginary brilliancy before him, as the peacock does in his feathers before his mate ?

IF there is vice in human nature, our pleading the merit of virtue must certainly be, in the account of a Creator, adjudged the most reprobate stage of it. Pray, what were we before he made us what we are ? Nothing. Does he lye under any obligations to us ? None. Can we assign any reason then, why we should not once more become nothing again, if it should please omnipotent wisdom ? Has the Most High, by creation, divested himself of power to dispose of his creatures

tures as he pleases, without their own consent and approbation? Have we no other standard for ascertaining the goodness of the Creator, but the measure of our meriting it? And supposing we did so, cannot the Creator be kind to whom he pleases, tho' they merit no good at his hand, but the contrary? If we receive the reward of our deserts, we certainly can have nothing to object, why the Creator may not be as kind as he pleases to unworthy creatures; still they are his creatures, and, we must allow, he may do with his own what he pleases, unless we are as wicked and envious as the labourers in the vineyard.

WHAT you judiciously urge, replied the author, is unanswerable; but the brightening of evidence and overturning of objections, sometimes produces a very contrary effect, to what indifferent people would expect. The Deity of the moralists is not an independent Creator, but a limited monarch, who has some law of their conceiving above him. But it is their misfortune, that they have never studied the plan of their own constitutions, otherwise they would have perceived, that God, without descending from the sovereign independency of His goodness as a Creator, proposed to be inconceivably kinder to man than they could have imagined. They would also have perceived, that it was so far from putting any affront upon human nature, to maintain its incapacity for discovering spiritual truths, that it was ascribing

a dignity to it, which the most self-sufficient presumption could not have suggested to men. As it was no less in effect, than saying that human nature was formed for deriving and maintaining its intelligence and correspondence with spiritual truths, upon the same plan that our body is formed for its intercourse with, and enjoyment of nature, or the world without us; and that divine information was as necessary a medium to our knowledge of spiritual things, as light is to our sensible acquaintance with the beauties, the fullness, and the riches of nature. This is proposing to men, what indeed it would never have entered into their minds to flatter themselves with, namely, the same relation to, and property in the Creator, as is established between creatures of this world, and the System which upholds them.

I AM convinced, said I, that it must be so; and that it can be for no other reason, that the Creator has both so extended and subtilised the stupenduous frame of the natural world, and concealed the principles and powers by which, as a system, it is conducted, from human penetration, but in order to reserve for himself, the privilege of discovering himself, and his boundless fullness, to creatures capable of receiving the discovery. If he proposes to constitute himself a world for the maintainance and enjoyment of our spirits, certainly the grandeur of that world must be as superior to this, as infinite omnipotence is to its own productions: And if the

the Creator has rendered our knowledge and correspondence so close and immediate with a world so infinitely inferior to himself, can the pride of man be so rank, and so absurd, as to presume, that his connection with the infinite Author of all things, must be of his own planning, and maintained by his own wisdom and imaginations.

WHAT do the patrons of natural religion mean, to propose to mankind so gross an absurdity and denial of omnipotence, as to assert, that God could not convey a revelation to his creatures, unless they were previously qualified for discovering him without one? Are they afraid of a God who inherits any powers, but such as they are pleased to assign to him and permit him to have? Has he who created man, divested himself of capacity to touch the mind of man, and to make his understanding feel his power in what manner he pleases? Cannot he who is infinite in power create the mind of man in the same state, as the senses of man were in before they were affected by sensible objects? And cannot he act the same part to the powers of the understanding, which he has made light and air do to our eyes and ears? At this rate, there could not be such a thing as inspiration; which can be nothing but the mind feeling itself influenced and enlarged with divine powers, which it is conscious are not its own. But if God, by that or any other means, can make us know what we could not otherwise have conceived; I must be also of the mind,

mind, that the Author of our beings has power to make himself known to us, tho' we be previously ignorant of him. What power a philosophical God may have, I will not take upon me to determine.

If such unbecoming sentiments of the Creator flow from ignorance, replied the author, when they know better the revealed nature of God, and the constitution of their own frame, they will alter their sentiments.

DEPENDANCE is the unalterable characteristic of a creature. This dependance is two-fold : One immediately upon the Creator ; to the word of whose power we, and all nature, owe the continuation of our existence every moment. We have no security against our dropping into nothing at any moment of time, but the immutability of his purpose who continues us in being. The characteristic properties of matter bear all the marks of unchangeable duration : But can more irresistible evidence be produced, to determine, that the Creator has reserved the knowledge of himself among men for his own discovery, than his having so cloathed that, which exists every moment only by his will, with all the appearance of unchangeableness ? An attribute which, nevertheless, can belong to nothing but God. The very supposition of the annihilation of matter, is an idea which could never have entered into the heart of man. God only could tell us, that matter could
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be reduced into that state. *That no place could be found for it*; which is no less than abolishing every property belonging to it.

BUT there is another dependance essential to created beings, considering them as alive; and that is a *system of powers* reared for maintaining, supporting and entertaining them, with principles of life and objects of enjoyment. All material beings depend upon the heavens and the earth: Their existence is in that system, and their absolute dependance is upon it. Were the powers of that great engine to be suspended for one moment, all nature, and all the distinguishing properties in which the numberless tribes on earth are displayed, would become utterly extinguished in the twinkling of an eye.

NOW if God has endowed us with spirits, capable of immortality, and of an existence independent of the frame of nature, stately and unbounded by our conceptions as it is; what one reason have we to presume, considering these spirits of ours are creatures, as much as any plant is, that grows in the waste where the foot of man never trod; that they will be, or are intended to be preserved in being, without the subserviency of any system to maintain them in life, and furnish them with happiness and enjoyment?

BUT has man the daring impudence to propose to himself, that God will erect himself into a system, or dispensation as infinitely surpassing the frame of nature, as the Creator

transcends the work of his own hands, for his endless life, and enjoyment as a spirit; but who, tho' a spirit, depends upon the breath of God's mouth. I know not, said I, what man may have the presumption to expect: But, I am certain, it would never have entered into his mind to have imagined it. And because he has not the pride of inventing it, replied the author, I wish he may not be found guilty of treating it with ridicule and contempt.

HOWEVER, the present state of our souls is a certain demonstration, that our spirits must live in a state of either created or uncreated dependance upon some system fitted for its support. The whole faculties, life, knowledge, and entertainments of our souls are as necessarily chained to our organs of sense, as these are to the frame of nature which supports and entertains them; and our intellectual knowledge can rise to nothing, which our senses, and the perceptions which depend on them, do not minister unto it. In short, our spiritual powers are poised between two worlds, *God and nature*. The latter gains access by our *senses*; and the former penetrates into our understanding by *testimony*. I have noticed before, that we are constitutionally as much formed for receiving testimony, and acting upon it, as we are for being influenced by our senses. God has stamped both upon the materials, and structure of the world, the philosophical characters of immutability; in order to minister absolute security to us as creatures depending upon its influences. Notwithstanding which, its men-

contingent existence depends upon the sovereignty of his will and power, which he can withdraw whenever he pleases: And therefore it is suitable to the divine dignity, to make his own *Testimony*, his own veracity and immutability, a more solid foundation of security for the dependance of man as a spirit, upon him as a *spiritual world*, than any marks of unchangeableness he has impressed upon the work of his hands, for our security as depending upon this natural system.

THE thought is striking and bold, I replied, and it must be true: For, if the *word* of God gave being to this immense and seemingly unchangeable fabric, he must make the immutability of his own infallible *word* and *testimony*, the only foundation of our security for the certainty of a spiritual world. It seems to be for this very reason, and to enforce the propriety of it, as you observed already, that man, by his constitution, is framed for depending, in the common affairs of this life, as necessarily upon testimony, as upon sensible evidence.

YOU'LL be further confirmed in that, said the author, if you consider the nature and use of language. It is a divine invention necessary to our natures, and by means of which we are rendered rational. Without such a recapitulation of sensible things, and verbal translation of our ideas, they could be of no intellectual use to us, more than they are of to the brute creation. By means of it, we are enabled to apply the *terms* and *phrases*

phrases drawn from sensible things, to subjects which are purely of an intellectual or spiritual nature. Without it we would be destitute of all possible means of analogy upon which all spiritual knowledge depends. It is the only instrument, by which God has determined to manifest himself to our understandings, and to translate the impressions which the world makes upon our senses, into a stile which he can use to unfold and explain the Creator, in that relation he exhibits himself, as standing in to rational creatures. By these means, the whole splendor and oeconomy of the creation, which we foolishly imagine is exhibited, merely, for our support and investigation, is resumed by Him, and appropriated to interpret unto us, His own perfection and fullness. If men have spirits so vastly superior to their bodily frame, which is a miracle of mechanics; it is absurd to suppose, that we should be left to a system, however noble, which corresponds only with our mechanical part, to pore upon it, for our happiness and enjoyment as spirits. But if we will depend upon the system of nature, and our own capacities, for arriving at a knowledge of, and intercourse with the Creator; I say again, what is the substance of that unanswered, tho' reproached first section of the *observations*; That God has taken care to defeat these our pretensions, by shutting up himself from our discovery, with that seal of apparent immutability and inscrutable power, which he has stamped upon his works, and beyond which no human efforts can penetrate.

I AM fully satisfied, said I to the author :
 If I or any person could have been so inatten-
 tive and ignorant as to mistake your design ;
 what you have said is more than sufficient to
 make any one ashamed of such gross misap-
 prehension. I wish, replied the author, the
 invectives and misrepresentations which have
 been propagated against me had been mis-
 takes : But surely, the authors of them know
 well enough, that I have advanced nothing
 but what several celebrated defenders of re-
 velation have in effect maintained. I shall
 trouble you only with one instance. It is
 admitted, I believe, by all who challenge the
 sufficiency of reason for discovering the be-
 ing and nature of a Creator, that, it must be
 sufficient in the first place, to instruct us in
 the knowledge of our own nature and im-
 mortality as spirits : And certainly it must be
 so; for, if we are not at all qualified for ana-
 lyzing our own natures, how can we be sup-
 posed qualified for finding out Him who is
 unsearchable ? Now the Author of the *divine*
legation of Moses has undertaken to prove the
 certainty of a revelation, by maintaining its
 authority was supported, from *Moses* to *Ezra*,
 among the body of a populous and rational
 people, without the knowledge of their own
 immortality, or the sanction of either future
 rewards or punishments.

I own, I do not think it is paying any
 great compliment to either the dignity or
 goodness of the Most High, to suppose, that
 ever he would constitute the momentary and
 trivial enjoyments of animal life, as either the

sole or principal motives of conformity to His law, which is wholly spiritual; that even he intended, that rational creatures should consider earthly enjoyments, as any more than examples and shadows of something infinitely more worthy the name of happiness; in short, that, in any age of the world, or state of mankind, God proposed, that those who were intended for a future state, should live in the brutish ignorance of it or its concerns, and of the respect due to them. But whatever was the meaning of such a plan, as that author's which is too high for me to conceive; it is evident that whoever supposes people may live under a revealed discovery of God, in the ignorance of their own natures and future destination; must be supposed when destitute of information, incapable of discovering truth, of a much more sublime and abstracted nature, than that of their own constitutions.

HERE I took my leave of the author, having discovered that both my visit, and the calumnies he was at that time exposed to, coincided with some other more interesting occurrences, to which he owed a greater attention, than to either of these.

I am, Madam, your humble servant.

most respectfully,
your Ladyship's
most obedient, humble Servant.